

# WILDLIFE SMART

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## COEXISTING WITH WILD TURKEYS

*Wild turkeys are not native to Manitoba, however, many residents of the province enjoy the hunting and viewing opportunities their presence provides. In some situations, wild turkeys may come into conflict with people, particularly when they cause property damage, make excessive noise or exhibit aggressive behaviour toward people or pets.*

*There are things you can do to reduce the risk of conflicts with wild turkeys. This fact sheet offers some helpful advice to protect yourself, your family, your property and wild turkeys.*

### THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WILD TURKEYS

- Wild turkeys were introduced to Manitoba in the late 1950s to provide a hunting opportunity.
- Wild turkeys are dispersed throughout the southern portions of agro-Manitoba and can be found in some urban centres.
- Wild turkeys are capable of flight though they prefer to remain on the ground. They roost in trees at night.
- Wild turkeys come into conflict with people when they damage property by leaving droppings, by scratching (such as landscaping, vehicles, and shingles), or by consuming crops.
- Wild turkeys walking on roadways can disrupt traffic flow and increase the risk of vehicle collisions.
- Wild turkeys can cause excessive noise, particularly during the spring breeding season as the males try to attract mates.

- An aggressive tom (male) may also attack an object in which he can see his reflection, believing it to be another competing male. This can mean scratches and dents to cars, especially ones with shiny, reflective chrome bumpers. It can also result in damage to windows.
- A wild turkey may also attack to protect itself or its young; they are especially protective while nesting.
- When provoked, a wild turkey may kick with its legs, using the spurs on their back of the legs as a weapon, bite with its beak and ram with its relatively large body.
- The Wildlife Act prohibits the killing of a wild turkey in defence of property.

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## THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CONFLICT

### Reduce risks for people

- Avoid approaching a wild turkey, particularly one that is nesting. Approaching a wild turkey could provoke an aggressive defensive response.
- When encountering bold behaviour from a wild turkey that is not on a nest, use loud noises, swatting motions with a broom, or water sprayed from a hose, to encourage them to leave the area.
- Being accompanied by a dog on a leash can be an effective deterrent, however, do not allow your dog to chase wild turkeys as this is illegal.

### Don't feed wild turkeys in urban areas

- If wild turkeys become used to handouts from humans, they can lose their fear of people, putting both turkeys and people in closer proximity and at greater risk. Aggressive behavior towards people often occurs when turkeys have become overly comfortable in the presence of people, usually over several months or even years, in areas where turkeys are fed.
- Providing nutrient-rich food (such as bird feed) has the potential to increase wild turkey reproduction and survival rates. This can lead to increased wild turkey populations and increased conflicts in urban areas.

### Reduce the risk of vehicle collisions

Be alert on roads where wild turkeys are known to frequent. If a turkey approaches or crosses the road:

- Slow down and check your rearview mirror.
- Flash your headlights to warn other drivers.
- Leave a safe amount of distance between you and other drivers.
- If the wild turkey crosses, brake firmly and stop only if you can do so safely.
- Avoid swerving – you could lose control or crash into another vehicle.
- Avoid stopping – continue to move through the area slowly, honking your horn if necessary to get the wild turkey(s) to move off the road.



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## Reduce the risk of property damage

### Exclusion

- Netting or fencing can be used to exclude wild turkeys from small areas such as gardens. If the fenced area is too large, the turkeys may just fly over the fencing.

### Scaring deterrents

- Bird spikes can be used to prevent wild turkeys from roosting in an area. These are typically fabricated of metal spikes protruding from a base. The spikes are not designed to hurt a bird, but rather to deter it from landing in that location.
- The use of many other scaring devices can be effective, at least on a temporary basis. Wild turkeys can become familiar with the presence, noise or action of these devices, making their effectiveness short-lived. To prevent habituation and prolong the scaring effect, change the type of device or move them around the property on a regular basis. Be considerate of your neighbours when choosing appropriate devices.

*Be alert on roads where wild turkeys are known to frequent.*

- Device options to consider include:
  - Motion-activated devices: lights, water-sprayers and noisemakers.
  - Noise-making devices: radios, propane-fired scare cannons (in rural areas where by-laws permit).
  - Effigies (scare-crow type figures) of wild turkey predators: human, eagle, owl, or coyote
  - Other predator images: helium balloons with graphics of large predator eyes, or kites shaped like large birds of prey.
  - Streamers: lengths of shiny or bright materials strung between stakes, poles or trees and allowed to move in the wind.
  - Sticks with strands of reflective plastic tape tied to them can be placed around a yard to deter wild turkeys. Sticks should be placed at a slight angle, so the strands move with the slightest air current.

### Lawful Hunting

- Hunting is an effective and efficient means to manage wild turkey populations. By allowing hunting, municipalities and landowners can reduce conflicts with wild turkeys, and assist in maintaining their populations at socially acceptable levels that the local habitat is able to support.



*In some areas, wild turkey populations can become higher than desired by local residents and it may become necessary to relocate some birds to another more suitable area.*



## RELOCATION OF WILD TURKEYS

- In some areas, wild turkey populations can become higher than desired by local residents and it may become necessary to relocate some birds to another more suitable area. Wildlife biologists work with local game and fish groups, Wild Gobblers Unlimited and the Manitoba Wildlife Federation to live-capture groups of birds and move them to a location where hunting opportunities can be provided.
- Capturing and relocating birds is preferred from January to March (depending on snow melt) as they are usually gathered in larger flocks and are easier to lure into a trap. Locations for release are chosen based on habitat, food availability, and hunting opportunity.
- Suitable habitat for relocation typically includes river valleys, oak bluffs, and other forest stands that have cattle feedlots or other food sources nearby. Relocation does not occur near towns or cities.
- Game and fish groups may request birds to be released in their area, with input and approval from the local wildlife biologist.
- To request the relocation of wild turkeys from your area, or for more information about wild turkey relocations, please contact a local provincial wildlife biologist, call 1-800-214-6497 or email [wildlife@gov.mb.ca](mailto:wildlife@gov.mb.ca).

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**For more information on reducing the risk of conflicts with wild turkeys and other wildlife, visit [manitoba.ca/human-wildlife](https://manitoba.ca/human-wildlife).**

**To report wildlife showing aggressive behaviour or that appears sick, injured, or orphaned, contact a conservation officer at the local district office or call the TIP line at 1-800-782-0076.**